



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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ACSE-PAO

5 June 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: USARCENT Social Media Policy

1. Purpose: To establish policy and standard operation procedures (SOP) for the effective use of social media websites for U.S. Army Central (ARCENT), its subordinate units, and Family Readiness Groups.

2. Applicable References:

- a. [Standardizing Official U.S. Army External Official Presences \(social media\)](#) Memorandum, December 4, 2012
- b. [U.S. Army Social Media Handbook](#), Version 3.1, January 2013
- c. [U.S. Army Slideshare](#) website (the Army Online and Social Media Division loads all of its content here)
- d. [Department of Defense Social Media User Agreement](#)
- e. [U.S. Army list of registered Social Media Websites](#)
- f. [CENTCOM FAQ on Security for Social Media](#)
- g. [Responsible and Effective Use of Internet-based Capabilities](#), DTM 09-026

3. Terms Defined: U.S. Army External Official Presence (EOP) – an Army social media website as defined by the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, Online & Social Media Division. This SOP covers all social media platforms - technologies that enable social interaction. These include, but are not limited to:

- a. Social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace, Foursquare, LinkedIn)
- b. Video and photo sharing websites (Flickr, YouTube)
- c. Micro-blogging sites (Twitter)
- d. Blogs (including corporate or personal blogs as well as comments)

e. Forums and discussion boards (e.g., local discussion boards, Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups)

f. Online encyclopedias (e.g., Wikipedia, Sidewiki)

4. Applicability: This policy applies to all Soldiers and civilians who have administrative rights to post content on ARCENT's official EOPs, ARCENT subordinate EOPs, and Family Readiness Group EOPs. While Soldiers and individuals affiliated with the U.S. Army are welcome to participate in social media, we expect everyone who participates in the online space to understand and to follow these simple but important guiding principles. Our overall goal is simple: to participate online in a respectful, relevant way that protects our rapport with the American public and follows established regulations.

a. This SOP refers to the use of official Army EOPs. In private use of social media, ARCENT Soldiers and Civilian employees are reminded that, while it is Department of Defense (DOD) policy to encourage civilian DOD employees and members of the Armed Forces to carry out the obligations of citizenship to the maximum extent possible consistent with the restrictions imposed by law and regulation, such use carries responsibilities and consequences.

b. Soldiers and Civilian employees may state personal opinions in unofficial social media sites, however, they may in no way post comments, photos, pictures, or other items that indicate those opinions are those of the Department of Defense, the United States Army, or ARCENT. Likewise, ARCENT personnel must refrain from extremist comments, or those improperly disparaging of elected officials, or that indicate support for the violent overthrow of the government. Doing so may negatively impact security clearances, and/or result in possible disciplinary action for Soldiers, and potential adverse action for Civilian employees.

5. Purpose: The adoption of Social Media and EOPs into the Public Affairs program gives ARCENT the ability to expand its media footprint, create new relationships, publicize our actions and events to untouched American and international audiences, and support ARCENT objectives. Our goals:

a. Enhance distribution of communications products by reaching previously untouched or underused publics.

b. Increase our credibility to publics/stakeholders who favor Social Media platforms.

c. Establish faster, more direct two-way communications between USARCENT and some of its publics.

d. Increase awareness and visibility of ARCENT and its Soldiers.

e. Develop Social Media, so during a potential crisis it can be used to inform the public.

6. Requirements:

a. Obtain Approval for Social Media Presence. Per a 21 Oct 2010 Secretary of the Army memorandum titled “[Delegation of Authority – Approval of External Official Presences](#),” commanders of all Army Commands, Army Service Component Commands and Direct-Reporting Units have the authority to approve the establishment of External Official Presences (EOPS), which includes social media sites. Official uses of EOPs unrelated to public affairs are permitted. However, because these interactions take place in a public venue, personnel acting in their official capacity shall maintain liaison with public affairs and operations security staff to ensure organizational awareness.

b. Register Official Pages. Administrators must register all official U.S. Army social media pages in the U.S. Army Social Media Directory. This includes all official ARCENT social media pages, ARCENT subordinate unit social media pages, and social media pages of their respective FRGs. Register by submitting links and contact information via the U.S. Army Social Media Directory located at <http://www.army.mil/media/socialmedia>. The U.S. Army’s Online and Social Media Division (OSMD) will manually review each submission and publish the sites that adhere to the established guidelines (refer to the links in the OCPA Standardization Memo.) If OSMD has any issues or questions with link submissions, they will contact the individual who submitted the link(s). When the OCPA Online & Social Media has reviewed and approved an EOP, they will list it on the U.S. Army’s Social Media Directory website.

c. Inform ARCENT Public Affairs. Once you have established a social media website, you must inform the ARCENT Public Affairs Office of the existence of the EOP(s). Include a link to each EOP and the page administrator’s contact information (name, rank, phone number and email address). The ARCENT Public Affairs Office maintains the official ARCENT social media pages. Directorates within ARCENT at the MCP, OCP, or any other location may have social media webpages, but they must follow this SOP.

d. Designate Page Administrator(s). U.S. Army units must designate administrator(s) for official public-facing social media pages. At a minimum, page administrator(s) assume responsibility for maintaining social media pages by means of implementing [branding](#), posting content, monitoring user feedback and responding to users. Page administrators will determine the frequency of posts and engagement based on resources. Administrator(s) also reserve the authority to provide administrative access to other users, if necessary.

e. Complete Training. Soldiers and social media page administrators should have completed OPSEC Level I Training and will comply with this SOP and the OCPA Standardization Memo, including completing the following training: Social Media and Operations Security Training (at the Information Assurance Training Center) and the Defense Information System Agency’s social networking class (refer to the links in the OCPA Standardization Memo.) Other recommended training courses: [OPSEC Support Staff \(IOSS\) courses](#) 3500 and 1500.

f. Content Approval. Release authority is a critical component of maintaining official social media pages. Administrators should establish a method to ensure content review before posting –

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being mindful of Security, Accuracy, Policy and Privacy. Content that should NOT be posted on official pages include, but is not limited to: unit/personnel rosters; information, other than authorized releases, about casualties prior to official confirmation that next of kin have been notified; FOUO information; and information regarding events or incidents currently under investigation. Other units, services and nations must give explicit approval before releasing any information about their units, equipment and servicemembers. Furthermore, many of our partner nations in the CENTCOM AOR do not want us releasing information about their interactions with us. So check with the ARCENT PAO before posting any information about another nation.

g. Security. While social media use is a means of being transparent, security is paramount when it comes to sharing information using online platforms. **Do not discuss** information that may compromise operations security, or [OPSEC](#), on social media pages. This includes detailed information about the mission of assigned units, details on locations and times of unit deployments, and details concerning security procedures. Page administrators should monitor pages for any potential OPSEC violations and determine the best course of action (screen capture and delete content; report violations to ARCENT's chain of command; educate social media users on what constitutes appropriate post, etc.) Monitor your social media presences and make sure external social media users are not posting sensitive information on your official pages. Monitor your Facebook wall and comments posted to your YouTube, Flickr, Twitter and Blog presences.

h. Accuracy. Once information is online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if administrators "remove" or "delete" it later, or attempt to make it anonymous. Check spelling and check facts before posting. If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. Furthermore, the way you answer an online question may be accurate to you, but inaccurate to others. Keep in mind the "world view" when participating in online conversations, and remember that you are always representing your unit, ARCENT, and the United States Army.

i. Policy. To the extent that resources are available, ensure social media use complies with applicable mandates, such as [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), [Department of Defense Directive-Type Memorandum 09-026](#), [U.S. Army Standard Operating Procedure](#), [U.S. Army Delegation of Authority](#), [Responsible Use of Internet-Based Capabilities](#), [the Hatch Act](#) and [Records Management](#). Do not make any post that even has the appearance of endorsing a business, organization, or political party.

j. Propriety. Not all information that can be released should be released. Remember that though the target audiences for our EOPs are primarily internal, anyone can see them, including our partners and enemies in the Middle East and Central Asia. Err on the side of caution before releasing any information. This includes not only the obvious (inappropriate words, ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also topics that may some of our audiences may consider objectionable or inflammatory—particularly politics and religion. You may note elections and religious observances, but don't give any opinion about them.

k. Engage, listen and respond to your audience. An EOP such as Facebook is a different format than a unit/command website. A website is a form of one-way communication on which you place products such as photos, press releases and videos for your audience to view, read, and watch. An EOP is a form of two-way communication on which you post information, photos and videos, and invite your audience to participate in the process by commenting on what you post. Information on a press release or photo cutline on an EOP should be slightly different, less formal, than on a unit/command website.

l. Moderate Pages. Page administrators must closely monitor all discussion boards and comments, but there should be a balance as not to over moderate pages and online exchanges between users. Allow users connected to your pages to fight your battles for you, as well, when possible. They are, by virtue of their nature, not the official (UNIT) responders and, as such, carry with them a different level of credibility.

m. Address Negative Comments. Do not avoid negative comments. An open forum comes with certain risk of negativity and to shy from it will potentially tarnish credibility. However, responses must accurately express the U.S. Army's position without editorializing or straying from the facts. Only delete or block comments or users when a clear pattern of malicious, derogatory behavior is apparent and they are in violation of the terms of participation. Prior to deleting a post from Facebook, take a screen shot of the post to be deleted and keep it on file. Keep a log of all malicious material that you have deleted.

n. Be Mindful of Copyright, Trademarks, Litigation & Personal Information. Social media posts and content must respect copyright, privacy, fair use, financial disclosure, and other applicable laws. Always give people proper credit for other's work and make sure you have the right to use something with attribution before you publish it online. Do not publish or report on conversations that are meant to be pre-decisional or internal to the U.S. Army unless given permission by your chain of command. As a standard practice, avoid commenting on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties the U.S. Army may be in litigation with. Lastly, always protect sensitive information, such as protected acquisition and personally identifiable information.

o. Privacy. You must protect the privacy of individual service members. [The Privacy Act of 1974](#) set this principle into law. Soldiers must remain conscientious with regard to any personally identifiable information that we collect, including how we collect, store, use, or share that information; all which should be done pursuant to applicable privacy policy, laws and information technology rules.

q. Relevance and Timeliness. Post information during or as soon as possible after an event. All posts should be relevant to ARCENT, your unit or FRG, or issues that affect Soldiers and/or Family Members.

r. Following. On certain platforms administrators can also "follow" or "like" other users. Be judicious in choosing who to follow. Other DoD organizations are clearly acceptable, and administrators may also consider people and organizations who have an interest in ARCENT,

who are influencers in Social Media, who have a large number of followers, who are likely to pass on ARCENT information, etc. It is also possible on Social Media for scam artists, porn sites, and fake accounts to follow or become a fan of your EOP. Block these as soon as you discover them.

s. Add value. Your organization's brand is best represented by its people and everything you publish reflects upon it. U.S. Army organizations should use blogs and social networks in a way that helps accomplish the U.S. Army mission. If it helps you, your fellow Soldiers, DA Civilians and Contractors, our family members or our partners to do their jobs and solve problems; if it helps to improve knowledge or skills; if it contributes directly or indirectly to the accomplishment of the U.S. Army's mission; if it builds a sense of community; or if it helps to promote Army Values, then it is adding value.

7. Terms Of Participation:

a. Example welcome message for a unit website: Welcome! This is the official U.S. Army (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, Blog, etc.) for (UNIT) where you will find the most recent information and news about us. Our goal to provide the public with information and news about (UNIT) and allow for an open forum of discussion about relevant topics. If you are looking for our official web page please visit <http://www.arcent.army.mil> or <http://www.army.mil>. Please feel free to express your opinion about the U.S. Army in an objective and respectful way that allows for a continued information relationship. Participants are asked to follow the posting guidelines below. (UNIT) reserves the right to remove any posts in violation of the posting guidelines.

b. Posting Guidelines: Posts will be removed if they violate the guidelines listed below:

(1) No graphic, obscene, explicit or racial comments or submissions, or comments that are abusive, hateful or intended to defame anyone or any organization.

(2) No solicitations or advertisements. This includes promotion or endorsement of any financial, commercial or non-governmental agency. Similarly, we do not allow attempts to defame or defraud any financial, commercial or non-governmental agency.

(3) No copyrighted or trademarked images or graphics. Imagery posted on the Facebook should be owned by the user.

(4) No comments or photos that suggest or encourage illegal activity.

(5) No documents of any kind should be posted on this page.

(6) You participate at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments, your username and any information provided.

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(7) The appearance of external links on this site does not constitute official endorsement on behalf of the U.S. Army or Department of Defense.

(8) Many of the above guidelines are covered in the [Department of Defense Social Media User Agreement](#), which you can link to, or copy and paste from, on your social media website.

8. Point of Contact: The point of contact for this memorandum is Sgt. 1st Class Tim Meyer, who can be reached at (803) 885-8877 or timothy.j.meyer6.mil@mail.mil.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryan Hilferty", written over a light blue horizontal line.

BRYAN HILFERTY
Colonel, Infantry
Chief, Public Affairs